

# Acculturation Experiences of the Ethiopian Diaspora in USA: The Case of Las Vegas, Nevada

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## Abstract

*Research findings indicate that migration from homeland is commonly associated with different kinds of acculturation problems. Other evidences indicate that migration is an opportunity for better life particularly when life at home is seriously negotiated. The third view holds that the outcome of migration is rather a function of the personal journey of the immigrant per se as well as the accommodative characteristics of the host country. Along these lines of arguments, the objective of this study was to assess the acculturation experiences of the Ethiopian Diaspora in Las Vegas. A total of 118 participants were drawn to constitute the sample from among the Ethiopian diaspora living in Las Vegas at the time of data collection. Both quantitative (questionnaire) and qualitative (interview) tools were used to generate data. The questionnaire constituted the 'Acculturation Strategy Scale' (Berry, 2006), 'Self-Evaluated Language Proficiency Scale' (Marin and Gamba, 1996), 'Acculturative Stress Scale' (Mena et al. cited in Tafoya, 2011) and 'Coping Scale' (Carver, 1997). Interview guide was developed and held with some immigrants to explore their acculturation experiences. Descriptive statistics, one sample t-test, independent t-test, correlation analysis and analysis of variance (ANOVA) were successively employed to analyse the quantitative data. Major findings indicated that Ethiopian immigrants in Las Vegas were well integrated into the American culture, had high level of language proficiency, weren't vulnerable to acculturative stress and employed positive coping to dealing with stressful experiences and migration related difficulties. It was recommended that establishing and strengthening an Ethiopian Community in Las Vegas may even boost these acculturation experiences further. It was also recommended to take lessons from Las Vegas and scale up support strategies to Ethiopian diaspora in other parts of the Globe.*

**Key words:** *Acculturation experience, acculturation strategy, acculturative stress, coping, Ethiopian Diaspora, language proficiency, migration.*

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## Introduction

Acculturation refers to the social and psychological process of change (Sam, 2006) that occurs when individuals come into contact with a culture other than their own (Redfield, Linton, and Herskovits cited in Tafoya, 2011; Sam, 2006). The changes can be physical (like change in diet and exposure to new diseases), social (such as change of friends), economic (e.g. a new job), cultural (like changes in language), and/ or religious (Berry et al., 1987). This process of change could be positive and helpful in improving one's life chances and mental health in the dominant culture (Berry, 2005). It could also be disruptive due to the inherently challenging nature of change (Berry, 2005) and adaptation to a new socio-cultural expectation (Berry, 2005; Berry et al. cited in Marsha, 2011) resulting in such acculturative stress as uncertainty, anxiety, depression, and even psychopathology (Al-Issa and Tousignant, 1997). Therefore, how individuals manage such challenges is a crucial process of adaptation to a new cultural context (Smith, Bond, and Kagitçibasi, 2006) that is affected by *antecedent factors (acculturation conditions)*, accompanying *strategies (acculturation orientations)*, and *impacting on acculturation outcomes* (Celenk and Vijver, 2011) that obviously take different texture across *contexts or settings*.

Acculturative conditions are individual and group-level factors that have impacts on the way people acculturate to a certain culture. These include educational attainment (Berry, 1997), motive of migration (Akram, 2012), length of stay (Celenk and Vijver, 2011; Akram 2012), marital status, presence of children, family structure and function (Akram, 2012), religious beliefs and practices, negative experiences (Akram, 2012), cultural knowledge, cultural identity, amount of contact with hosts (Galchenko and van de Vijver, 2007), age of migration<sup>2</sup> (Beiser et al. cited in Berry, 1997), gender<sup>3</sup> (Beiser et al. cited in Berry, 1997), language fluency<sup>4</sup> (Padilla cited

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<sup>2</sup>Acculturation is easier in early age and it will have an increased risk from adolescence onwards.

<sup>3</sup>Females are more at risk for difficulties in acculturation than males.

<sup>4</sup>Facilitate immigrants' contact with natives and broaden their social networks and resources (Choi and Thomas, 2009), is a critical factor for immigrants' success in the labor market (Mahmud, Alam, and Hartel cited in Lu et al., 2012), and inability

in Celenk and Vijver, 2011), and power relationships between the majority and minority groups (Akram, 2012) that would accentuate racism and invisibility as a serious risk factor (Fozdar and Torezani, 2008)<sup>5</sup>. Contrasting cultural values and practices (Ward, 1996), and language difficulties and discrimination (Gil, Vega, and Dimas cited in Crockett et.al. 2007) may also mean cultural conflict leading to poorer adaptation (Berry, 1997) and acculturative stress (Berry et al., 2002). In this connection, Ethiopian and American cultures can be considered to stand in sharp contrast mainly along the five dimensions of Hofstede's socio-cultural orientations (Hofstede, 2001). Tadesse (2008) expounds that the life philosophy of the American society, which is based on individualism, is very different from that of the Ethiopian immigrants in United States who grew up in the Ethiopian collectivist tradition.

The second components of acculturation experience having substantial relationships with adaptation are acculturation strategies (or orientation, styles, preferences, and attitudes) (Berry, 1997). These strategies involve the way immigrants prefer to relate themselves to the society of settlement (cultural adoption) and country of origin (cultural maintenance) (Celenk and Vijver, 2011). This orientation poses two essential questions for ethnic/cultural minorities residing in multicultural societies: whether to maintain ethnic identities and how much to be actively involved in mainstream culture (Kang, 2006). It is up to the individual immigrant to decide how much to keep from one's original culture and how much to take from the new culture (Berry, 2001) ultimately having four options to pick from: assimilation, separation, integration, and marginalization. Assimilation occurs where original culture is rejected and the host culture is adopted; separation happens when the heritage culture is maintained and host culture is rejected; integration (biculturalism) is when immigrants try to balance both cultures; and marginalization exists when both heritage and host cultures are rejected (Kang, 2006). In terms of contributions of these strategies to positive adaptations, evidences indicate that integration is usually the most

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*to communicate may potentially lead to social withdrawal, lower self-esteem, and feeling of hopelessness (Da Costa 2008).*

<sup>5</sup>*Murphy (cited in Berry et al., 2002) stated that though racism is never absent, it is likely to be less prevalent in culturally plural societies and gets heightened when the economy of the host country is oscillating (Tadesse, 2008).*

successful orientation (Berry, 1997) contributing for higher levels of overall wellbeing (Phinney et al., 2001) while marginalization is the least; and assimilation and separation strategies are intermediate (Berry et al., 2002). Kosic (2002) found that separation and marginalization strategies were correlated with a higher incidence of emotional disorders, psychosomatic symptoms, low socio-cultural and psychological adaptation than integration and assimilation. One of the reasons why this occurs is because the integration strategy incorporates many of the other protective factors like willingness for mutual accommodation (having two social support systems) and being flexible in personality (Berry et al., 2002). It is, however, not easy for immigrants to decide on which strategies to follow and studies show that the choices are subjective (Berry, 2001) and a function of many factors including the time factor. Evidences also suggest that over the period of acculturation, individuals explore various strategies eventually settling on the one that is more useful and satisfying than the others (Kim cited in Berry, 1997).

Acculturation outcomes are the third components of the acculturation/adaptation process that encompass both internal (psychological outcome) and external (social outcome) adjustments. Internal adjustment refers to a set of such psychological (emotional and affective acculturation) outcomes as a clear sense of personal and cultural identity, good mental health, and the achievement of personal satisfaction in the new cultural context (Berry, 1997). External adjustment can be thought of as acquiring social and cultural skills and knowledge (Safdar, Struthers and Oudenhoven, 2009) helping individuals to interact effectively with in the mainstream culture and dealing with stressors (Celenk and Vijver, 2011). In fact, in some studies economic adaptation is mentioned as a third type of adjustment (Aykan and Berry, 1996) to refer to the degree to which work is obtained; is satisfying and is effective in the new culture. According to Berry and colleagues (2002), these adaptations usually have different time courses and different predictors<sup>6</sup> depending on contexts.

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<sup>6</sup>*Psychological problems often increase soon after contact followed by a general (but variable) decrease over time; socio- cultural adaptation, however, has a linear improvement with time. Good psychological adaptation is predicted by personality variables, life change events, and social support, while good socio cultural*

In general, the changes immigrants undergo while living in a new culture (easily manageable or hard to manage), whether they adapt to the new culture or not, the strategies adapted (assimilation, separation, integration, and marginalization), and the ensuing outcomes of the adaptation process (psychological, behavioral/ social and economic) depend to a large extent on individual, group, and social/ cultural factors. Even more important are the contexts in which the immigrants are supposed to experience in the host country. One would not, for example, expect immigrants in the USA to have similar acculturative experiences with those in the Middle East.

The acculturation context of the Ethiopian diaspora in the USA needs to be seen in terms of its long years of presence and international visibility. It has been recognized that the Ethiopian diaspora has mostly settled in North America and Europe (MPI, 2014); though there has still been a mounting rise of immigrants into the Middle East in most recent years. In fact, Ethiopian refugees were one of the largest groups resettled in the United States in the 1980s (MPI, 2014), significantly contributing to the large pool of Ethiopian population in the United States at present<sup>7</sup>. This bigger pool of Ethiopian diaspora was in fact a cumulative outcome of migration that occurred over a protracted period of time (Abye, 2007)<sup>8</sup>.

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*adaptation is predicted by cultural knowledge, degree of contact, and positive intergroup attitudes. Both aspects of adaptation are usually predicted by the successful integration acculturation strategy, and by minimal cultural distance (Ward and Kennedy, 1993). Economic adaptation is predicted by migration motivation and status loss on first entry into the world of work (Berry et al., 2002).*

*<sup>7</sup>The population is estimated to be around half a million (FDRE, 2008) holding a second place in comparison with other sub-Saharan countries; next only to Nigeria (MPI, 2014).*

*<sup>8</sup>According to Abye (2007), there were four waves of Ethiopian immigrants in the past years. The first wave refers to the small elite group of Ethiopian immigrants before the year 1974, who were mostly members of the ruling classes. Since they were few and migrate for professional purposes such as for higher education, their motivation to return home was strong as they were almost guaranteed a very high social position. The second wave of immigration covers the years from 1974 to 1982 and comprises of individuals who entered the country to escape the repressive political system of the Derg (Kobel, 2007). The third wave was from 1982 to 1991 (Abye, 2007). During this time, there were people who went to the USA for reasons*

When Ethiopian refugees arrived in the United States at first, they were inclined to immigrate in to regions that were already heavily populated with Ethiopians, such as Los Angeles, Washington, D.C., Dallas, and New York City. Of these cities, Washington, D.C. took the lion's share because of its large service sector economy (Kobel, 2007). According to the 1992 Office of Refugee Resettlement data, the majority of Ethiopians who were admitted to the United States were males (62%) mainly because males were more able to meet the educational and occupational requirements set by the United States Government for admittance to the country. Religion was the other factor. The majority of Ethiopians admitted to the United States were Christian because they were considered the best candidates to easily assimilate into American culture. However, the main factor that determined whether an Ethiopian immigrant could enter the United States was educational background. Therefore, the Amharic-speaking Ethiopians were the most heavily represented group of Ethiopians admitted to the United States in the 1990s because they had better access to educational opportunities in Ethiopia (Kobel, 2007).

Living abroad as the first generation immigrants has not been easy for many Ethiopians. Upon their arrival, there were no established communities that eased their resettlement (Giorgis cited in Degnesh, 2006). They had to redefine their identity based on the color of their skin and on the philosophy that was not part of their upbringing (Degnesh, 2006). But, unlike these earlier immigrants, those who arrived within the last decade or so have begun emphasizing their own racial distinctiveness as an Ethiopian rather than being grouped into already existing groups like African American (Kassahun,

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*of family reunification and as tourists who did not return home. The famine Ethiopia had experienced (i.e. from 1984-85) was highly catastrophic killing one million people and causing a higher refugee number at this time (MPI, 2014). The last wave began in 1991, when the EPRDF came into power. The immigrants in this wave were mainly professionals who fled ethnic conflicts, violence, and political repressions (Abye, 2007). However, Kassahun (2012) referred to them as the DV group for the reason that most of them went to the USA due to the U.S. immigration reform called the Diversity Visa (DV) Lottery Program (Mains, 2007) to indicate that they mainly have economic reasons to migrate; refugee flows out of Ethiopia being minimal.*

2012).The second generation of Ethiopians seemed most at home with the African American community and took advantage of the social support networks established by the first generation of Ethiopians (Kobel, 2007). Some of the activities that Ethiopians were engaged into strengthen their sense of belonging included joining social and economic support groups modeled after the social structure in their native land like Ekub and playing soccer (Kobel, 2007).

Immigrants and refugees who went to the United States were generally motivated by the economic and educational opportunities in the host culture (Juniu cited in Belayneh, 2009). Contrary to their expectations, many Ethiopian immigrants who intended on escaping the poverty of their homeland find themselves underemployed and didn't not adapt well to the fast paced and "fend for yourself" attitude built into the American society (Cichon et.al. cited in Kobel, 2007). Therefore, many Ethiopians were employed in low wage service jobs such as parking lot and gas station attendants, waiters and waitresses, and neighborhood store attendants; though there were few Ethiopian immigrants who had managed to open successful restaurants that characterize Ethiopian cuisine. Moreover, there were and still are many others who have been unable to secure gainful employment and have participated in state and federal assistance programs when qualified; that made the unemployment among Ethiopian immigrants much higher than the Americans in general (kobel, 2007). As Giorgis noted (cited in Degnesh, 2006), various professionals who work closely with Ethiopian communities have observed an increase in alcohol addiction, drug abuse, depression and suicide. Worse, they do not even get a treatment because of the taboo associated with seeking help for psychological problems. And, in situations where they seek treatment, it will be complicated because of the language and cultural differences. According to Lakew (cited in Kobel, 2007), part of the problem for the whole situation is that Ethiopians lack valuable exposure to the team work, leadership, and organizational activities that many American children are trained to achieve at an early age. These prevents Ethiopian immigrants from making career advances in the United States which explains why they rarely collaborate in business projects, fail to form strong social and political organizations that promote the interests of Ethiopians in the United States, and lag behind other groups of immigrants who have moved up to the middle class in USA. In addition, Teklemariam (cited in Belayneh, 2009) added more reasons for the problems with Ethiopian immigrants such as lack

of relevant and true information about American life, confusion with the technological difference between the home country and America, cultural shock, and unwillingness to change because of the challenges they face as people of collectivist culture in adjusting to the individualistic culture of the American society.

One would ask if such acculturation experiences are any different from those in the Middle East which, unlike the one in USA, have attracted the attention not only of researchers (e.g. Abebaw, 2012; Assefach, 2012; Birkie et al., 2009; Emebet, 2002; Mesekerem, 2011; MoLSA and MoFA, 2010; Rafael, Inna and Nelly, 2009; Regt, 2007) but also of the Ethiopian Governments and NGOs as well. Researchers have shown that Ethiopian immigrants to the Middle East countries were exposed to various forms of abuse and exploitation (Abebaw, 2012; Assefach, 2012; Birkie et al., 2009), enforced cultural isolation and undermined cultural identity (Birkie et al., 2009), and disappointed expectations (Assefach, 2012; Birkie et al., 2009; Meseret, 2013) that eventually resulted into social and emotional problems (Assefach, 2012), cultural shock, maladjustment, frustration, and depression (Meskerem, 2011), mental distress (Birkie et al., 2009; Meseret, 2013), and higher rates of hospitalization (Rafael, Inna, Nelly, 2009). In recognition of these problems as well as the massive deportations of Ethiopian refugees particularly from Saudi Arabia in 2013/14 on the claim that they were illegal immigrants and refugees, the Ethiopian Government has also responded to these saddening crisis through, among others, banning issuance of legal documents to those who plan to travel to and work in the Middle East in the last couple of years until such time that a new policy guide is issued to better handle the process.

It can be noted that immigrants to the Middle East may share some common experiences with those in USA. However, differences seem to outweigh similarities. For one thing, Ethiopian immigrants to the Middle East are huge in number, mainly women, migrated not only legally but also illegally to a significant proportion, and for such domestic work as cleaning, child minding, servicing, gardening or care-taking of elderly people in all sectors of private households (ILO, 2010). Furthermore, while language and cultural barriers have also jeopardized domestic workers' interaction with their employers (Meskerem, 2011), lack of job opportunities, limited income and false promises made by brokers were the major factors drawing women for trafficking in the first place (Assefach, 2012). Moreover, the majority of



Ethiopian girls who have migrated to the Middle East countries come from rural areas; these Ethiopian girls do not have experience with the different machines used in cities for different purposes; even they have never seen a washing machine or dishwasher (ILO, 2011). When these domestic workers arrive in the Middle East countries, they do not know how to perform the work to a satisfactory level of employers' expectation, which poses disappointment and unkind treatment of their employers for unfulfilled promises (ILO, 2011). In the light of these arguments, we can hardly generalize the acculturation experiences in the Middle East to the one in USA. This study is then conceived to fill in this gap of assessing the acculturation experiences of Ethiopians and born Ethiopians in USA (Las Vegas) with the specific objectives of examining (1) the acculturation orientations of the Ethiopian diaspora, (2) the factors affecting acculturation of immigrants in the American culture, (3) how far Ethiopians and born Ethiopians have adjusted psychologically, behaviorally and economically into the American culture, (4) the coping mechanisms and support system the Ethiopian diaspora use to manage stress related to their acculturation, and (5) the challenges and opportunities Ethiopian diaspora experience while acculturating to the host culture.

## Methods

**Study Site:** The study was conducted in the city of Las Vegas, USA. Much of the Las Vegas landscape is rocky and dusty and the climate is a subtropical, hot desert climate. There is a year-round sunshine in the city. The leading motorists of the Las Vegas economy are tourism, gaming, and conventions; where most of the Ethiopian diaspora are employed in. There are two Ethiopian orthodox and two protestant churches in the city. While the Ethiopian Muslim community shares the mosques with the host society but they have the Ethiopian Muslim community. Besides, there are stores and restaurants owned by the Ethiopian immigrants where the diaspora is able to buy Ethiopian commodities and get the cuisine of their original culture. There are also some Ethiopian owned night clubs and smoke houses that mainly serve the Ethiopian diaspora.

The city was purposefully selected for this research not only because one of the researchers lives in this city, but mainly because she was inspired, as a new champ joining the team, by the dynamics of life evident among the Ethiopian diaspora in this city. Studies show that Las Vegas is one of the most stressful cities in the United States (Levy, 2010) since it is a center of tourism and conventions. The Ethiopian immigrants who mostly work in these industries have to cope with the city that never sleeps. Regarding their social interactions, they tend to interact more with each other: meet for birthdays, wedding and baby showers, and mourning ceremonies, than with the host society which is mostly limited to work place. The technological disparity from their home country and the new individualistic culture can be considered as challenges to their adaptation. Consequently, there are only few Ethiopian immigrants in the city who owned and run convenient stores, Ethiopian restaurants and tax service providers.

**Participants:** The target population of this study consisted of people who went out from Ethiopia and reside in Las Vegas. According to the United States Census Bureau, Foreign-Born Population 2010-2012 American Community Survey 3-Year Estimates (USB, 2013), there were about 5,432 people who were born in Ethiopia and reside in Clark County; a county that made Las Vegas a center and include other four cities in its jurisdiction (North Las Vegas, Henderson, Mesquite, and Boulder city). Assuming that all the five cities have an equal proportion of Ethiopian diaspora, the population in Las Vegas was about 1086. Following Cohen, Manion and Morrison's (2000) sample size determination technique, it was decided that for a population size of 1086 cases, about 118 participants were sufficient to be considered as a sample (66 males and 42 females for the questionnaire and 5 males and 5 females for the semi-structured interview). Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2000) indicate that with a confidence level of 95 % (or a sampling error of 5 %), it is appropriate to take 217 samples from 500 population, 278 samples from 1000 population, 322 samples from 2000 population and so on.

The procedure of sampling was such that one of the researchers attended a session of the Ethiopian Protestant Church Thursday program, local Catholic Church Sunday program and a meeting for Muslim Ethiopian diaspora to distribute the questionnaire in addition to one more session visit of cafeterias, Starbucks (where most Ethiopians go to get their coffee and catch up with

their friends) and Ethiopian owned convenient stores. In each area, a random sample of about 25% of the persons met was selected to fill in the questionnaire. Participants were briefed about the purpose of the study and oral consent was secured prior to administration.

**Instruments:** the questionnaire that was used to examine the Ethiopian Diasporas' acculturation experience consisted of four parts in addition to the first part featuring such relevant demographic characteristics of the participants as age, sex, religion, years lived in the United States, age at migration, educational level, employment status and income. The second part of the questionnaire is acculturation strategy preference scale adopted from Berry and colleagues' 'Acculturation, Identity, and Adaptation' scale (Berry, 2006). It measures the four acculturation attitudes (assimilation, integration, separation, and marginalization) along thirteen domains of life: cultural traditions, social activities, coworkers, friends, marriage, neighborhood, language, food, cloth, movie, magazine, music and cultural identity. Participants were asked to choose the culture they prefer in dealing with these life domains with the result that choosing the combination of both cultures for a certain domain of life are inclined to "integration", those who choose only the Ethiopian culture are inclined to "separation", those who prefer the American culture only are inclined to "assimilation" and those who prefer neither cultures are inclined to "marginalization". The third part of the questionnaire is perceived English language ability measure adapted from the Linguistic Proficiency Subscale of the Behavioral Acculturation Scale originally developed by Marin and Gamba (1996) for Hispanics who live in the American culture. The researchers modified it by changing the ethnic culture and language (Hispanic) into Amharic. It originally consisted of 8 items with a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (not at all) to 5 (very much) which includes proficiency in understanding, reading, and writing English, and the extent to which their English can be understood by others. The fourth part of the questionnaire assesses stressful situations participants face during their encounter in the American culture. The scale is adopted from the shorter version of the Social, Attitudinal, Familial and Environmental Acculturative Stress (SAFE) Scale (Mena et al. cited in Tafoya, 2011) by including additional stress provoking situations and removing questions about language use to avoid redundancy. It measures stress in four domains: familial, attitudinal, social, and environmental. The 22 items are rated on a scale

ranging from 1 (strongly agree) to 4 (strongly disagree) in terms of perceived cause of stress. The last part of the questionnaire is about coping mechanisms participants use to deal with stress and other problems they encounter. The scale is adopted from shortened version of the COPE inventory or brief COPE (Carver, 1997) that measures active and avoidant coping styles<sup>9</sup>. Respondents were required to indicate how frequently they used each strategy on a four point scale that ranges from 1 (never) to 4 (always).

Semi-structured telephone interview was also conducted with ten interviewees to gather information about acculturation experiences that were not addressed through the questionnaire. The interview questions included migration history and subsequent experiences; future plans and related other questions that came up during the interview.

In order to establish content validity, both the questionnaire and the interview items were judged by two experts as relevant or irrelevant. The judges were also asked to give comments against each item about phrasal problems (language clarity, social desirability of items...), and cultural relevance. The experts were also asked to suggest additional items for inclusion. Modifications were made based on the comments of the experts and then the modified version was subjected to a pilot test to get practical feedback from the field. Based on the feedback obtained from the field, redundant, ambiguous and related-other problems were modified. Furthermore, the acculturation strategy questions that were in a form of 'fill-in the blank' form in the original English versions were found confusing and hence were converted into a question form. For self-evaluated language questions, the 'very much' option was replaced by 'as a native' in order to clarify the meaning of a "well speaker". The Cronbach alpha's reliability coefficients were calculated from the pilot study and it was found that despite the smaller size of the sample employed in the pretest, the scales had very good reliability indices that ranged from a minimum of .738 for 'Acculturation Strategy Scale to a maximum of .947 for the 'Language Scale'.

As regards analysis, the responses from the scales were properly filtered and coded to make data ready for statistical processing. The acculturation

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<sup>9</sup>Active coping (items reflecting problem solving, planning, and positive reframing) and avoidant coping (items reflecting behavioral disengagement, mental disengagement/self-distracting, denial, and substance use).

strategy scale was recoded based on the association of each strategy to the overall wellbeing of immigrants (Sam and Berry, 1995). Therefore, integration was considered as the most effective strategy (coded as 4) followed by assimilation (coded as 3) and separation (coded as 2); marginalization being the least (coded as 1) (Berry, 2003). In addition, in both stress and coping scales, positively stated items were scored directly while negatively stated items were scored reversely.

## **Findings**

Analysis of findings begins with a descriptive statistics of the demographic characteristics of participants as well as the major study variables (acculturation strategies, factors affecting these strategies, and adjustment outcomes). Then inferential (parametric) tests are conducted to determine the status of participants on the study variables (one-sample mean test). This is then followed by test of differences between two (t-test for independent samples) as well as three or more groups (through application of ANOVA or F-test). When ANOVA yields significant F-ratios, post hoc comparison is made to identify the groups contributing for the differences. Qualitative data were also presented in appropriate places so as to complement the quantitative data. Prior to the application of the parametric tests, attempts were made to check for the tenability of the underlying assumptions of both t-tests and F-tests. According to Stevens (2007), both tests are robust for normality assumption mainly for a sample greater than 100 as the case is in our present research. As regards homogeneity of variance, the two tests are still robust if groups sizes are equal or approximately equal, i.e.  $\text{largest/smallest} < 1.5$  (see Stevens, 2007). In our present case, the proportions of the largest to smallest group sizes are all less than 1.5 validating the tenability of comparability of variances.

### Socio-demographic Characteristics

As indicated in Table 1, the motives of immigration for most of the participants were economic (34.6%) followed by the need to accompany parent/spouse (20.6%). The majority were involved in driving (32 %) and hotel/restaurant jobs (22.3%). While males were dominantly involved in the former, females were involved in the latter jobs. It can also be seen in Table 1 that for 55.2% of the participants, it took them up to three months to get a job after arrival.

*Table 1: Characteristics of participants*

<i>Variables</i>	<i>Group</i>	<i>Frequency</i>
<i>Motive of migration</i>	<i>Economic</i>	37 (34.6%)
	<i>Academic</i>	13 (12.1%)
	<i>Employment mandate</i>	3 (2.8%)
	<i>Accompanying parent/spouse</i>	22 (20.6%)
	<i>Political reasons</i>	13 (12.1%)
	<i>Others</i>	19 (17.8%)
<i>Job</i>	<i>Retail/business</i>	7 (6.8%)
	<i>Hotel/restaurant</i>	23 (22.3%)
	<i>Driving jobs</i>	33 (32%)
	<i>Administration jobs</i>	6 (5.8%)
	<i>Health related jobs</i>	8 (7.8%)
	<i>Other</i>	18 (17.5%)
	<i>Not applicable</i>	8 (7.8%)
<i>Time it took before getting a job after arrival</i>	<i>0-3 months</i>	58 (55.2%)
	<i>3-6 months</i>	22 (21%)
	<i>6 months to a year</i>	11 (10.5%)
	<i>More than a year</i>	6 (5.7%)
	<i>Not applicable</i>	8 (7.6%)

The educational level of participants summarized in Table 2 indicates that while more than half (54%) of males are with college education or above, only one-third (33%) of females were with this educational level.

*Table 2: Cross tabulation of Gender of participants by Educational level*

<b>Gender</b>	<b>Educational level</b>				<b>Total</b>
	<i>Less than High School</i>	<i>High School</i>	<i>College/ University</i>	<i>Graduate school</i>	
<i>Male</i>	3(4.6%)	27(41.5%)	29(44.6)	6 (9.2%)	65
<i>Female</i>	7(16.6%)	21(50%)	11(26%)	3(7%)	42
<i>Total</i>	10(9%)	48(44.9%)	40 (37%)	9(8%)	107

### **Acculturation strategies**

Acculturation strategies are choices immigrants make on their day to day activities in a host culture. They have alternatives of choosing their original culture, the host culture, both or neither. Therefore, Table 3 indicates the participant's choice of culture on their different life activities. As indicated in this table, most of the respondents were inclined to choosing "both Ethiopian and American" styles. That is, "integration" was the most frequently used type of acculturative strategy except for 'marriage partner' and 'cultural membership' activities in which "Ethiopian orientation" was taken.

Table 3: Participant's acculturation strategy preferences

<i>Life domains, Activities</i>	<i>Both Ethiopian and American (4)</i>	<i>American only (3)</i>	<i>Ethiopian only(2)</i>	<i>Neither American nor Ethiopian (1)</i>	<i>Not applicable</i>
<i>cultural traditions</i>	70 (64.8%)	3(2.8%)	33(30.6%)	2 (1.9%)	-
<i>social activities</i>	67 (62%)	3(2.8%)	36(33.3)	2 (1.9%)	-
<i>Coworker</i>	82 (77.4%)	18(17%)	2 (1.9%)	4 (3.8%)	-
<i>Friends</i>	74(71.8%)	5(4.9%)	21 (20.4)	3(2.9%)	-
<i>Marriage partner</i>	19 (17.8%)	6 (5.6%)	81(75.7%)	1 (.9%)	1(0.9%)
<i>Neighborhood</i>	77 (73.3%)	17 (16.2%)	9 (8.6%)	2 (1.9%)	-
<i>Language</i>	74 (69.2%)	13 (12.1%)	20 (18.7%)	--	-
<i>Food</i>	64 (59.8%)	10 (9.3%)	31 (29%)	2 (1.9%)	-
<i>Cloths</i>	67 (62.6%)	13 (12.1%)	25 (23.4%)	2 (1.9%)	-
<i>Movies</i>	72 (70.6%)	13 (12.7%)	14 (13.7%)	3(2.9%)	6 (5.6%)
<i>magazine/books</i>	74 (71.2%)	11 (10.6%)	14 (13.5%)	5 (4.8%)	3(2.7%)
<i>Music/gospel song</i>	64 (59.8%)	3(2.8%)	36 (33.6%)	4 (3.7%)	-
<i>Cultural membership</i>	46 (43.8%)	3(2.9%)	55 (52.4%)	1 (1%)	-
<i>Total</i>	850 (60.53%)	118 (8.39%)	377(26.85%)	31 (2.20%)	10 (0.7%)



The separation strategy ('Ethiopian only') was, on the other hand, fairly more common than the assimilation ('American only') strategy for some life domains except for 'neighborhood' and 'coworker' in which the latter was preferred.

Similarly, in the interviews held with some of the participants, it was indicated that they prefer to integrate both the Ethiopian and the American cultures in their day to day life. For example, most of them eat both American and Ethiopian food, watch movies from both countries, celebrate holidays of both cultures and consider values from both cultures. Additionally, with respect to keeping the Ethiopian culture, only few of them have friends that are not from Ethiopia, only one of the respondents got married to an American and almost all of the interviewees go to Ethiopian church.

### **Factors affecting the acculturation process**

One-way ANOVA and independent sample t- test were conducted to determine if there were statistically significant mean score differences among respondents' of different backgrounds in acculturative strategy preference. Table 4 presents summary of an independent mean test showing that there was no significant differences between males and females in their acculturation strategy preference ( $t(106) = -.131$ ,  $df = 106$ ,  $P > 0.05$ ).

*Table 4: Independent t-test for Respondents' gender and Acculturation Strategy preference*

<i>Variables</i>	<i>Category</i>	<i>Freq.</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>Sig</i>
<i>Acculturation Preference</i>	<i>Male</i>	66	41.94	6.99	106	-.131	.487
	<i>Female</i>	42	42.11	6.81			

One way ANOVA was computed (see Table 5) to see if there were significant differences in preferences of acculturative strategy among different groups of participants. The ANOVA revealed that there were significant differences in acculturative strategy preference only among the different religious groups ( $F(3,103) = 6.314$ ,  $P < 0.05$ ) such that the acculturative strategy of the Ethiopian Muslim diasporas were different from both the Orthodox (mean difference =

4.85165) as well as the Protestant (mean difference = 8.01190) Christians as learned from Tukey's Post Hoc Comparison Test.

*Table 5: Summary of One Way ANOVA for acculturation strategy preference as a function of different demographic variables*

<i>Variables</i>	<i>Df</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>Sig.</i>
1. Age	2,103	1.03	.380
3. Religion	3,103	6.31	.001*
4. Motive of migration	2,101	2.12	.069
6. Length of stay in USA	2,104	.646	.588
8. Age at migration	2,105	1.338	.267
10. Educational level	2,103	.772	.512
12. Employment status	2,100	2.402	.072
14. Type of job pursued	2,96	2.013	.071
16. Yearly income in USD	3,93	.426	.860
17. Marital status	1,102	1.082	.343
18. Availability of children	1,106	3.416	.067

*Note that the standard ANOVA table couldn't be presented because of space limitations*

\*P<0.05 SS = Sum of Squares; MS = Mean Squares; df= degrees of freedom

However, the interview held with the participants tend to imply that people who went to higher education in Ethiopia had a hard time adjusting themselves to the situation because they had a lower status compared to the one they had in Ethiopia at least in the first year after their arrival. It was said that their credentials were not accepted as they were. They were required to take additional training/ courses. When they wanted to go to school, it was difficult to start right away since they needed to save up some money to support themselves. Therefore, looking for a job would be their first step and this was supposed to limit them usually to lower status (i.e. Manual/ labor) jobs. One of the interviewees, who had a master's degree when he was in Ethiopia and upgraded his education after he got to Las Vegas, said '*You start all over again; all the hard work you had for school in your country has no value here*'.

As a result, most of the interviewees advised educated people to stay where they are and serve their country than being in a foreign land doing some lower level manual/ labor jobs. Similar to the educated people,

interviewees gave a slice of advice to those who had a good economic and occupational status in Ethiopia to stay in their homeland because so many of them regret that they went to America. For instance, two interviewees mentioned that they would not have come here in the first place if they knew things would be like this and they would not have stayed this long if it was not for the better schools for their children. Moreover, one of the interviewees mentioned the difference between Ethiopian immigrants who went from the rural and the urban parts of Ethiopia taking himself as an example, *'because I came from the rural part of Ethiopia and I am illiterate it is really an improvement in life that I get here but people who are literate and came from the cities in Ethiopia mostly have a hard time adjusting themselves to the situation because there will not be much new things to learn and/or they will work lower than their previous status'*.

Interviewees generally explained the employment situation in America as follows:

- *A person is obliged to work any job available; little chance to look for what one really wants*
- *Expecting to get a job in one's field of study is unthinkable*
- *New comers usually look for a job that a person they know is already working; because it's the only area they have information about and that is what they are encouraged to do*
- *Most of the time, it is not possible to choose work schedule. A person may work nights and weekends and may not meet family fairly enough*
- *Although many wished to have one's own private business, only few have managed to establish it.*

But, the good thing is as one of the interviewees stated, *'there are people who have a degree and ask money from other people in Ethiopia because they either could not find a job or their salary is not enough; this would not be a problem here'*.

According to the interviewees, the major factor affecting the acculturation experience of immigrants was the expectation immigrants bring with them from homeland. In fact, surprisingly enough, the acculturation experience was below expectations for almost all of the interviewees (see also self-rating of an item, 'I met the expectations I had before coming to USA', on Table 6). Most of them have related this expectation to the unrealistic

public image people in Ethiopia have about America mainly created by the Diasporas themselves through the behaviors displayed during return to Ethiopia for vacations. Interviewees held that these people do not always speak the truth about their experiences in America. They are commonly seen enjoying as much as they can and or supporting others but with the money saved up for many years. They may afford to spend what the locals can't do during vacations, but it does not mean that they are rich. However, people in Ethiopia only see what these persons have brought with them and become eager to have that chance to get better and quick access for money. Interviewees also mentioned that availability of relatives nearby would help anchoring the newcomer into the new context and thereby make the adaptation process easier.

*Table 6: Acculturative stress level of participants*

<b>No.</b>	<b>Items</b>	<b>1 Strongly Agree</b>	<b>2 Agree</b>	<b>3 Disagree</b>	<b>4 Strongly disagree</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>SD</b>
1	<i>Because I am from Ethiopia, I do not get enough credit for the work I do</i>	4 (3.7%)	15 (14%)	45 (42.1%)	43 (40.2%)	3.19	.81
2	<i>I often feel ignored by people who are supposed to assist me</i>	1 (0.9%)	7 (6.6%)	53 (50%)	45 (42.5%)	3.34	.64
3	<i>I often feel that people actively try to stop me from advancing</i>	2 (1.9%)	6 (5.6%)	42 (39.3%)	57 (53.3%)	3.44	.68
4	<i>Many people have stereotypes about my culture or ethnic group...</i>	6 (5.6%)	30 (28%)	36 (33.6%)	35 (32.7%)	2.93	.91
5	<i>In looking for a job, I sometimes feel that my ethnicity is a limitation</i>	2 (1.9%)	5 (4.7%)	41 (38.3%)	59 (55.1%)	3.47	.67
6	<i>Because of my ethnic background, I feel</i>	1 (0.9%)	6 (5.6%)	40 (37%)	61 (56.5%)	3.49	.64

	<i>that others often exclude me from participating in their activities</i>						
7	<i>It bothers me when people pressure me to assimilate</i>	5 (4.6%)	3 (2.8%)	49 (45.4%)	51 (47.2%)	3.35	.75
8	<i>People look down upon me when I practice the customs of my culture</i>	3 (2.8%)	1 (0.9%)	43 (40.2%)	60 (56.1%)	3.50	.66
9	<i>Loosening the ties with my country is difficult</i>	21 (20%)	38 (36.2%)	20 (19%)	26 (24.8%)	2.49	1.07
10	<i>It bothers me that I cannot be with my family</i>	16 (15.7%)	46 (45.1%)	19 (18.6%)	21 (20.6%)	2.44	.99
11	<i>It is hard to express to my friends how I really feel</i>	9 (8.6%)	9 (8.6%)	45 (42.9%)	42 (40%)	3.14	.90
12	<i>I don't have any close friend</i>	9 (8.4%)	8 (7.5%)	4 (42.1%)	45 (42.1%)	3.18	.89
13	<i>I don't feel at home</i>	11 (10.7%)	21 (20.4%)	44 (42.7%)	27 (26.2%)	2.84	.93
14	<i>It bothers me that family members do not understand my new values</i>	3 (2.9%)	12 (11.4%)	44 (41.9%)	46 (43.8%)	3.27	.77
15	<i>It bothers me that I have an accent</i>	7 (6.7%)	15 (14.4%)	42 (40.4%)	40 (38.5%)	3.11	.89
16	<i>I get teased/insulted because of my ethnic background</i>	4 (4%)	3 (3%)	34 (33.7%)	60 (59.4%)	3.49	.74
17	<i>I met the expectations I had before moving to USA</i>	14 (13.3%)	32 (30.5%)	41 (39%)	18 (17.1%)	2.60	.92
18	<i>I am satisfied with my job</i>	31 (30.1%)	31 (30.1%)	27 (26.2%)	14 (13.6%)	2.77	1.03
19	<i>I am satisfied with my life</i>	47 (43.5%)	33 (30.6%)	14 (13%)	14 (13%)	3.05	1.04

## Adjustment of immigrants

**Psychological adjustment:** Nineteen items were used so that respondents can rate their perception of acculturative stress provoking situations on four point scale (strongly agree-strongly disagree). Note that higher means indicate lower acculturation stress level because the items were negatively phrased and disagreement ('strongly disagree' and 'disagree' responses) with them (being assigned higher rating points) means better adjustment except the last two items.

Accordingly, summary of responses presented on Table 6 shows that in fifteen (almost more than 80 %) of the nineteen items, mean ratings are either very close or even more than a mean rating of 3.00. Very few exceptions to this higher ratings pertain to items like, "Loosening the ties with my country is difficult" (mean=2.49), "It bothers me that I cannot be with my family" (mean=2.44), I met the expectations I had before moving to USA (mean=2.60), and I am not satisfied with my job (mean=2.77).

One sample t- test was used to determine the general level of acculturation stress among the diaspora. The analysis (Table 7) indicated that the observed mean (56.63) is significantly different from the test value of 47.5; minimum plus maximum scores divided by 2 ( $t(107) = 65.66$ ,  $df = 107$ ,  $P = .000 < .05$ ). This suggests that the respondents' acculturative non-stress level is significantly greater than the expected mean score; which shows that respondents are not experiencing acculturative stress.

*Table 7: One Sample t-test on participants non-stress level*

Variable	$\mu$	Mean	SD	df	t	Sig
Participant stress level	47.5	54.63	8.64	107	65.66	.000*

\* $P < 0.05$      $\mu$  = expected mean    SD = standard deviation

Analysis was made to check if there are differences in acculturation stress level by background factors. The independent sample t-test on Table 8 shows that there was no significant difference between males and females in their stress level ( $t(106) = -.733$ ,  $df = 106$ ,  $P > 0.05$ ).

Variable	Category	Freq.	Mean	SD	Df	t	Sig
Acculturation stress level	Male	66	54.15	8.67	106	.733	.465
	Female	42	55.40	8.65			

Table 8: Independent t-test for Respondents' stress level and gender

One way ANOVA (Table 9) also revealed that many of the background variables were not making any significant difference in acculturation stress level: present age ( $F(3, 103)=1.839, P<.05$ ); religion ( $F(3, 103)=1.273, P<.05$ ); motive of migration ( $F(5, 101)=.799, P<.05$ ); length of stay in USA ( $F(3, 104)=1.627, P>.05$ ); age at migration ( $F(2, 105)=2.888, P>.05$ ); employment status ( $F(3, 100)=1.434, P>.05$ ); yearly income ( $F(6, 93)=.757, P>.05$ ); Length of stay before getting a job ( $F(4, 100)=1.512, P>.05$ ); marital status ( $F(2, 102)=.161, P>.05$ ) and availability of children ( $F=.641, P>.05$ ).

Table 9: One Way ANOVA of acculturative stress level by different demographic variables

Variables	df	F	Sig.
Age	3,103	1.839	.145
Religion	3,103	1.273	.288
Motive of migration	5,101	.799	.553
Length of stay in USA	3,104	1.627	.188
Age at migration	2,105	2.888	.060
Educational level	3,103	4.672	.004*
Employment status	3,100	1.434	.238
Job	6,96	2.495	.028*
Yearly income in USD	6,93	.757	.606
Length of stay before getting a job	4,100	1.512	.205
Marital status	2,102	.161	.851
Availability of children	3,104	.641	.591

\* $P<0.05$  SS = Sum of Squares; MS = Mean Squares; DF = degree of freedom

On the contrary, significant differences were observed in acculturation stress by educational level ( $F(3, 103)=4.672, P<.05$ ); Tukey's Post Hoc comparisons indicating that participants with educational level of primary school (mean difference = -11.75556), and high school participants (mean difference = -8.80556) were both different from those in graduate level. In

the same way, type of job perused was found to make a significant difference in acculturation experience ( $F(6, 96) = 2.495, P < .05$ ).

However, most of the interviewees stated life being very stressful in America which is especially related to the work environment. 'Everyone is scared they are going to lose their job. Every employer expects perfection from the employees. Every mistake is taken seriously. People can handle the job but it is the stress that comes with it that they cannot. So it is easier for them to sacrifice their social life' one of the interviewees told me. In addition some of them told me that many Ethiopians could not cope with the fast paced environment and become mentally ill and suicidal as a result.

Table 10: Self-evaluated language proficiency of participants

<i>Items</i>	<i>Not at all(1)</i>	<i>Very little(2)</i>	<i>Moderately (3)</i>	<i>Pretty much(4)</i>	<i>As a native (5)</i>	<i>Mean</i>
1. How well do you think you speak English	1 (.9%)	6 (5.6%)	34 (31.5%)	54 (50%)	13 (12%)	3.67
2. How well do you think you read English	2 (1.9%)	3 (2.8%)	21 (19.4%)	50 (46.3%)	32 (29.6%)	3.99
3. How well do you think you can write in English	2 (1.9%)	8 (7.4%)	25 (23.1%)	50 (46.3%)	23 (21.3%)	3.78
4. How well do you think you understand when people speak to you in English	1 (.9%)	6 (5.6%)	24 (22.2%)	54 (50%)	23 (21.3%)	3.85
5. How well do you think you can think in English language	4 (3.8%)	5 (4.8%)	30 (28.8%)	46 (44.2%)	19 (18.3%)	3.68
6. How well do you think People understand you when you speak in English	4 (3.7%)	4 (3.7%)	32 (29.9%)	54 (50.5%)	13 (12.1%)	3.64



**Behavioral adaptation:** Self-evaluated language proficiency is used as a measure of behavioral adaptation as it affects interpersonal relationships, job preference and success, and skills necessary to learn to adjust. Table 10 presents perceived evaluation of one's language ability on a five point scale. The majority of participants rated their language proficiency to be pretty good or more on the different language skills: speaking, reading, writing, comprehending, thinking, and listening.

One sample t-test (see Table 11), run to see if the observed mean was significantly different from a test value of 18, yielded that the observed mean is significantly higher than the expected one( $t(107) = 51.60, P = .000 < .05$ ).

In fact, the interviewees indicated that accent gives a hard time to most of the respondents. One of the interviewees expressed that it is even related with ability and they are treated as if they know nothing just because they have a non-native accent; 'a person who starts to speak English after getting here is better because s/he can learn the language with the native accent from the scratch but people who already speak the language before coming are likely to get difficulties changing the accent they already have.

*Table 11: One Sample t-test on participant's language proficiency*

Variable	$\mu$	x	SD	df	t	Sig
Participants' language proficiency	18	22.44	4.51	107	51.600	.000*

\* $P < 0.05$      $\mu$  = expected mean    SD = standard deviation

In the qualitative case, interviewees were found to note changes in their behaviors such as being more active, confident and assertive after getting into the American culture. In addition, although men didn't cook while in Ethiopia, it is possible to say that they are learning the skill now since it is a self-fend system that exists in America. Moreover, as one of the interviewees indicated "*the concept of time that is not as such valued in Ethiopia is appreciated in America*".

One of the interviewees said the American culture has an impact on the upbringing of the immigrants' children. He said, "*The children do not value how their parents struggle to give them a better future. Besides, after they grow up they don't look back and look after their parents as we did to our parents since the culture they grew in is very individualistic. In addition,*

*Parents have no chance to discipline their children the way they want to (the Ethiopian way/authoritarian parenting) because the children are going to be asked what exactly is going on in their house at school and they are happy to tell because they consider it as a freedom. It is also hard to strengthen them in religion”.*

Statistical analysis of the effect of background factors on language proficiency yielded significant differences by gender as can be seen on Table 12 ( $t=-2.37$ ,  $df=106$ ,  $P>0.05$ ).

*Table 12: Independent t-test for respondents’ language proficiency and gender*

Variable	Category	Freq.	Mean	SD	df	t	Sig
Acculturation Strategy Preference	Male	66	23.24	3.27	106	2.37	.000
	Female	42	21.16	5.79			

Significant were also such other variables (see Table 13) as (1) motive of migration ( $F(5,101)=5.472$ ,  $P<.000$ ) where participants who had academic reasons to migrate were found to have mean scores greater than those with economic (mean difference = 4.64865) and employment reasons (mean difference = 10.333) as well as those with reasons of accompanying parent or spouse (Mean= 6.22727), (2) age at migration( $F(2,105)=10.872$ ,  $P<.000$ ), (3) educational level ( $F=28.442$ ,  $P<.000$ ) where participants with primary school were less than those with high school (mean=-6.27083), college/university (mean=-9.775) and graduate (mean= 11.556), (4) type of jobs ( $F(6,96)=2.760$ ,  $P<.000$ ) where participants who have hotel/ restaurant related jobs were lower from that of participants who have administration and health related jobs (mean difference = -6.36957), and (5) yearly income ( $F(6,93)=2.38$ ,  $P<.000$ ) where participants getting less than 10,000 USD a year were lower than those getting more than 50,000 USD a year (-9.33333).

***Economic adaptation:*** Most of the interviewees struggled to get a job when they first arrive in the United States. What is more, they participate in low status manual labor jobs. All of the interviewees like the fact that they can be economically independent if they work hard and can be able to support their family in Ethiopia; which is something most of them could not do if they were in Ethiopia as they said. In addition, the interviewees related high salary with a person’s educational level and consider education as ‘the only way out

from labor jobs' and yet only few of them have managed to upgrade their educational status.

*Table 13: One Way ANOVA for language proficiency by demographic variables*

<i>Variables</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>Sig.</i>
<i>Age</i>	<i>3,103</i>	<i>2.084</i>	<i>.107</i>
<i>Motive of migration</i>	<i>5,101</i>	<i>5.472</i>	<i>.000*</i>
<i>Length of stay in USA (in years)</i>	<i>3,104</i>	<i>2.181</i>	<i>.095</i>
<i>Age at migration</i>	<i>2,105</i>	<i>10.872</i>	<i>.000*</i>
<i>Educational level</i>	<i>3,103</i>	<i>28.442</i>	<i>.000*</i>
<i>Employment status</i>	<i>3,100</i>	<i>.990</i>	<i>.401</i>
<i>Jobs</i>	<i>6,96</i>	<i>2.760</i>	<i>.016*</i>
<i>Yearly income in USD</i>	<i>6,93</i>	<i>2.238</i>	<i>.046*</i>
<i>Length of time before getting a job</i>	<i>4,100</i>	<i>2.314</i>	<i>.063</i>
<i>Marital status</i>	<i>2,102</i>	<i>.248</i>	<i>.781</i>
<i>Availability of children</i>	<i>3,104</i>	<i>1.738</i>	<i>.164</i>

*\*P<0.05 SS = Sum of Squares; MS = Mean Square; df = degree of freedom*

### **Coping mechanisms and support system**

Table 14 presents responses of participants regarding the use of both positive and negative coping mechanisms. As it can be referred into this table, participants seem to give higher ratings to items measuring positive coping: accepting the reality and learn to live with it (mean=3.06), extract good out of happenings (mean=3.13), thinking of a strategy about what to do (mean=3.47), *taking action to make the situation better* (mean=3.38), and *praying* (3.34). On the other hand, lower ratings were found for such inappropriate or negative coping mechanisms as avoidance (item 1), self-blame (item 2), denial (item 3), giving up/ withdrawal (item 4), distortion (item 5), and use of substances (item 6).

Table 14: Coping strategy preference of participants

1 = I haven't been doing this at all		2 = I've been doing this a little bit		3 = I've been doing this in a moderate amount		4 = I've been doing this a lot			
No.	I have been:	1	2	3	4	Mean	SD		
1	doing something to think less about it, (e.g., going to movies, watching TV, reading, sleeping)	30 (27.8%)	26 (24.1%)	33 (30.6%)	19 (17.6%)	2.38	1.07		
2	blaming myself for things that happened	43 (41%)	29 (27.6%)	23 (21.9%)	10 (9.5%)	2.00	1		
3	refusing to believe that it has happened.	50 (49%)	19 (18.6%)	23 (22.5%)	10 (9.8%)	1.93	1.05		
4	giving up trying to deal with it.	84 (81.6%)	8 (7.8%)	7 (6.8%)	4 (3.9%)	1.33	.77		
5	making fun of the situation.	60 (58.3%)	15 (14.6%)	20 (19.4%)	8 (7.8%)	1.77	1.02		
6	using alcohol, drugs to make myself feel better	95 (90.5%)	3 (2.9%)	3 (2.9%)	4 (3.8%)	1.2	.67		
7	accepting the reality and learn to live with it.	15 (14.6%)	16 (15.5%)	20 (19.4%)	52 (50.5%)	3.06	1.11		
8	looking for something good in what is happening to make it seem positive.	14 (13.5%)	12 (11.5%)	25 (24%)	53 (51%)	3.13	1.07		
9	Expressing my negative feelings.	21 (19.4%)	25 (23.1%)	30 (27.8%)	32 (29.6%)	2.68	1.10		
10	getting emotional support from others	25 (23.4%)	19 (17.8%)	31 (29%)	32 (29.9%)	2.65	1.14		
11	thinking of a strategy about what to do.	8 (7.5%)	6 (5.7%)	20 (18.9%)	72 (67.9%)	3.47	.907		
12	taking action to make the situation better.	10 (9.5%)	9 (8.6%)	17 (16.2%)	69 (65.7%)	3.38	.99		

13	praying	or	6	8	15	77	3.54	.86
	meditating		(5.7%)	(7.5%)	(14.2%)	(72.6%)		

Moderate ratings were observed regarding *expression of negative feelings and, more importantly, getting emotional support from others*. In relation to the latter, interviewees have also expressed the unavailability of social support that the immigrants can count on. Most of the interviewees do not have close friends though they participate in different social activities with their Ethiopian fellow mates. One of the interviewees said ‘*when you are in your country you have your family to count on in case something bad happens to you*’.

Table 15 presents more information that would help understanding participants’ use of negative and positive coping. As indicated in Table 15, participants’ use positive strategy is significantly higher than negative coping strategies ( $t(107)=19.99, p<.000$ ).

*Table 15: dependent t-test for respondents’ positive and negative coping strategy*

Variable	Category	Freq.	Mean	SD	df	t	Sig
Coping Strategy	positive	108	21.35	5.19	107	19.99	.000
	negative		10.15	3.19			

## **Challenges and opportunities of acculturation to the American culture**

This section includes experiences of the Ethiopian diaspora that were not addressed through the questionnaire. Results from the interview indicate generally that adaptation to a new culture is difficult especially in the first few years after arrival but this difficulty improves gradually through time.

Lack of information as to where to look for a job and the need to know someone to recommend for it after application and also lack of experience in manual/ labor jobs prior to migration in addition to undervalued work and educational credentials as mentioned earlier were mentioned by the interviewees as causes of difficulties in adjusting to the new environment. In addition, missing the family and friends back home and feeling lonely were pointed out by the interviewees. One of the interviewees said, ‘*it is hard to*

*get a friend who will understand and devote his time to you and your issues because everyone is tied up with one's own problems'*. Furthermore, the individualistic culture of the American society which is something they are not used to in their homeland, makes them feel lonely. Some mentioned they want to get married just because they are doing all the activities in their life by themselves and they want a company. The other result of the individualistic culture as the respondents noted is that everyone would prefer to win people over rather than helping them succeed which made everything to be a competition. This seems to lead them develop distrust among themselves.

Some of the interviewees also mentioned the existence of racism though they said it is not explicit. One of the interviewees said, *'Even though they will not say it out loud you can see it in their face; plus in many situations rules are tightened for blacks'*. This could indicate the level of acceptance by the host society and can impact their senses of safety and security and their feeling of being at home. One of the interviewees stated while expressing her overall migration experience as, *"No one will believe unless s/he sees it personally. Life is very tough in America; you cannot be lazy here, you have a family who thinks you have a lot of money and expect a lot from you. In addition, you have to pay bills over bills; which is a hard thing to do when it is not easy to make money"*. Most of the respondents the researcher interviewed want to go back to Ethiopia for good when they will become financially stable with the exception of two Muslims; they think the current government in Ethiopia oppresses Muslims.

It is also observed that there are Ethiopian immigrants who had a gambling addiction to a point they cannot save anything and seek for psychiatric assistance and some with mental instability walking around the city talking to themselves and interfere in other people's conversations. There are even Ethiopian immigrants who are beggars. Therefore, just because the majority of the immigrants lead a stable life in the American culture does not mean that there is no one among them who is struggling to survive. On the other side, the interviewees appreciate the political and social freedom in America and the fact that there are opportunities to support themselves irrespective of their educational level. Moreover, none of the interviewees consider themselves as an American, implying that they feel they belong to the Ethiopian culture and have an Ethiopian identity.

## Discussion

The success of acculturation experience is, among others, a function of the strategies adapted to orienting one's life to the host culture versus the original culture. Though integration in to a new society is not a linear process and research literature (e.g. Cichonet. al. cited in Kobel, 2007) still supports that Ethiopians had a hard time integrating into the American culture, most of our present participants are with an integrative strategy in which they cherish balancing the host and original culture. The results of this study seem to indicate that a number of Ethiopians and born Ethiopians have managed to establish a stable life in the American culture possibly because integration would keep them with both the original and the host culture. Nevertheless, there are some aspects (such as marriage and identity) that most of the participants hesitate to handover; most of them got married to Ethiopians and feel that they belong to Ethiopian culture irrespective of length of stay in the United States. Although studies show that marrying someone from the majority population results in immigrants' integration to a host culture (Rudiger and Spencer, 2003), the lower social interaction participants have with the host society might have resulted in their separation with respect to marriage. The identity part can be explained by Phinney and colleague's idea that ethnic identity is likely to be anchored in the host culture if pluralism is accepted (Phinney et al., 2001). Though the American society is diverse, there is hegemonic culture that disregards the diversity. Hence, this enforces the various minority groups to retreat to their own sub-cultures.

Acculturative strategies are in fact shaped by a host of factors including, for example, religion as it is also suggested in the findings of our present study. Corroborating our present finding, Tadesse (2008) holds that those who are Protestants in their religion are more likely to be acculturated to the American culture because of religious similarity. The result of this study confirms that Protestants have a higher integration level followed by Orthodox and Catholic participants whereas Muslims are the least acculturated. On the other hand, unlike the findings of previous research, immigrants' motive of migration (Akram, 2012), gender (Beiser et al. cited in Berry, 1997), length of stay in the host country (Celenk and Vijver, 2011;

Akram 2012), educational level (Berry, 1997), age at migration (Akram, 2012; Choi and Thomas 2009), marital status, availability of children (Akram, 2012) and a number of other factors are less important in making a difference in acculturative strategies. Inability of these variables to make differences in acculturative strategies being left for further inquiry, it can possibly be because of existence of some implicit socializing agents that orient people to get along with life as an immigrant. The collectivist tradition pervading life in the homeland could be extended down the road to life as a diaspora in the USA possibly reinforced by stereotypes, discrimination and racism. This maintenance of the collectivist life style may subject individuals to group influences (values, orientations, beliefs) than enhancing individual life trajectories. This would make individual variables become subservient to group norms. For example, it is not in a way educational background of an individual that determines how to acculturate but the implicit and explicit lessons and orientations from the sub-culture (of Ethiopian diaspora). Education did not become a facilitating factor for the acculturation might be because of the devalued educational credentials of educated immigrants that made them to be treated the same as the others. Immigrants' motive of migration not being a factor could be related with the availability of same options irrespective of their motives. The reason immigrants' length of stay did not make any difference in their acculturation might be due to their limited interactions with the host society other than work place interactions. Regarding the age at immigration, considering those who went at early age with their parents, the way their parents raise them might have something to do with the adaptation in addition to their exposure to how their parents and other Ethiopians struggle. However, the qualitative data seem to indicate that expectations prior to migration and availability of relatives are the major factors determining the adaptation experience of immigrants.

As regards adjustment of immigrants, research indicates that immigrants are likely to experience acculturative stress including lowered mental health, feelings of marginality and alienation, heightened psychosomatic symptom level, and identity confusion (Berry, 2006) as a result of negative life events in the host culture (Lazarus cited in Berry, 2005), contrasting cultural values and practices, language difficulties, and discrimination (Gil, Vega, and Dimas cited in Crockett, et.al, 2007), cultural loss and anxiety linked to uncertainty about how one should live in the new society (Berry et al., 2002), personal preferences conflicting with national policies (Horenczyk, 1996).



Although Ethiopian immigrants might not be freed from all these risk factors for acculturative stress, findings of this study indicate not only that they have lesser stress level (except for the difficulty felt about the loosening of ties with their home country and the fact that they cannot be with their family) but were also reported during the interview to develop certain important skills (like becoming more active, assertive and confident) because of the cultural difference between the two countries. Furthermore, contrary to other studies that indicated higher education as a predictive factor for lower stress (Beiser et al. cited in Berry, 1997), the results of this study shows that respondents with high educational achievement tend to experience relatively high level of stress. This may be due to the loss of status they encounter after migration. However, almost all of the interviewees mentioned their need to go back home after financial stability. In addition, some immigrants who were economically stable and had better educational status in Ethiopia regretted their migration.

The second area of adjustment, behavioral adaptation, pertains to acquiring culturally appropriate knowledge and skills that promote social and cultural learning (Safdar et al., 2009), and interaction with in the mainstream culture (Celenk and Vijver, 2011). Expressed in terms of these skills, or in a word 'language proficiency', participants were also found to be higher particularly in reading and listening but relatively lower, as expected, in speaking skills thus making them bother about their accent. The result also reveals that alike the commonly accepted belief about females' superiority in language proficiency, male participants were found to have better proficiency than the females mainly due to the higher educational level of male participants. Furthermore, a number of such other variables as educational level, motive of migration (academic and political), jobs pursued, and income that is related to the educational level were found in this research to make differences in language proficiency.

Economic adjustment was the last measure of adjustment considered. Confirming MPI's view (2014), the motive of migration for most of the participants were economic reasons. Meaning, most of the participants went to the United States looking for better economic level for themselves and their family. The result of this study shows that most of the participants (55.2%) were able to find a job between three months of their arrival in contrast to a research conducted by Bratter and Eschbach, (2005) that claim Ethiopians having difficulty getting employed. As also mentioned in previous research

(e.g. Belayneh, 2009), a significant number of Ethiopians were involved in lower status or manual/ labor jobs - mainly driving jobs for males and hotel/ restaurant for females. This is not only because of devaluation of former educational credentials but also because many Ethiopians had to work hard to support themselves and other dependents back home; thus costing their money and time that would have been spent for upgrading their education to be entitled for better paying jobs. In any case, participants were found to have economic independence and were able to support one's family.

The results obtained from the coping mechanism scale shows that the participants tend to use positive rather than negative coping mechanisms to dealing with stress and difficulties that stem from adaptation to a new culture. Praying and thinking about a practical solution for one's problem have been the most frequently used coping techniques by the participants of this study. This could be the result of either high religious orientation of Ethiopians in general or due to social desirability bias. Studies show that Ethiopian immigrants in the United States fail to form social support networks (Jibeen and Khalid, 2010) and strong social and political organizations that promote the interests of Ethiopians in the United States (Kobel, 2007). Correspondingly, there happens to be no formally organized social support network of Ethiopians and born Ethiopians in the Las Vegas area that facilitates their collaboration and strengthen the diaspora's sense of community, which could also help new comers to ease their resettlement. Furthermore, as results from the qualitative data show, a number of Ethiopians criticize the unavailability of strong social support that can help them in times of difficulties. This can be due in part to the fact that '*Ethiopians in the united states are sharply divided along ethnic lines – sometimes more divided than the people at home*' (Kassahun, 2012).

In fact, evidences from the qualitative data of this research as well as previous research (e.g. Giorgis cited in Degnesh, 2006) reveal that there are Ethiopians and born Ethiopians who were susceptible to alcohol addiction, drug abuse, depression and suicide. Likewise, the result from the qualitative data confirm that there are a number of Ethiopians who are vulnerable to drug abuse, mental illness and suicide.

Generally speaking, results of this study indicate that Ethiopian immigrants have political and social freedom when they live in the American culture in addition to the economic independence; being able to support oneself and one's family. The challenges that were mentioned by the

participants were accent, undervalued credentials, missing families and friends back home and difficulty rebuilding a new social life. The participants also mentioned gradually changing some behaviors to adapt to the individualistic nature of the American culture.

The qualitative data that was collected from interview confirms the idea that Ethiopian immigrants face discrimination because of their race (Belayneh, 2009). But the result from the statistical data analysis indicates that discrimination is not a significant factor for participants' stress. The qualitative data seem to indicate existence of such problems as racial discrimination, cultural stereotypes, and difficulty getting a job because of ethnicity, social exclusion and lack of perceived freedom to practice customs of one's culture.

## Conclusions

The findings of this study generally suggested that integration is the most frequently used acculturation strategy by the Ethiopian immigrants in the city of Las Vegas. Religion, prior expectation of the acculturation experience and availability of relatives in the host country have been shown to affect immigration experiences of the Ethiopian diaspora in Las Vegas. Other factors were not found to play an important role in affecting acculturation strategies. Regarding immigrants' adjustment (psychologically, behaviorally and economically), it was found that there was lower level of acculturative stress. There is a mixed result in participants' language ability from qualitative and quantitative data where the former shows that there is language difficulty while the latter suggests high language ability.

In addition, their non-native accent also brought some difficulties. Economically, most of the Diasporas work in lower wage jobs and yet a significant number of them are able to be economically independent, and have acquired culturally appropriate knowledge and skills that would help them interact with the host society. However, some immigrants specifically those who had good economic and educational status while they were in Ethiopia have regrets about their migration. As regards coping techniques and support system, most immigrants are likely to use positive coping while some of them use less constructive or negative coping like abusing alcohol and

drugs. In addition, the qualitative data analysis reveals the unavailability of social support system for the Ethiopian immigrants in Las Vegas that could help them in times of difficulties. Concerning challenges and opportunities of the Ethiopian diaspora, economic independence, political freedom and social freedom were the opportunities mentioned by the immigrants. In addition, there were some challenges that were faced by the Ethiopian diaspora in Las Vegas; undervalued work and educational credentials and missing families and friends back home in addition to difficulty rebuilding a new social life.

In general, the acculturation experiences of Ethiopian diaspora appear positive in many ways. It was learnt that such strengths were noted with the absence of any formal source of support. Hence, it is recommended that establishing and strengthening Ethiopian Community would even boost such acculturative experiences. We also need to take lessons from these encouraging experiences and scale up support strategies to Ethiopian diaspora in such other parts of the Globe as in the Middle East where lots of problems are heard in managing Ethiopian immigrants. In fact, further research inquiry is needed to explore, among others, why many of the factors identified in previous research were unable to explain acculturative strategy. The need to explore the role of the collectivist tradition and mainly through in-depth qualitative approaches may be particularly useful in this regard.

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